



Migration: Facts, Representation, Stories

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LAWS AND POLICIES

THE LEGAL PRODUCTION OF MEXICAN/MIGRANT “ILLEGALITY”

“Mexican migration to the US is distinguished by a seeming paradox that is seldom examined: while no other country has supplied nearly as many migrants to the US as has Mexico since 1965, virtually all major changes in US immigration law during this period have created ever more severe restrictions on the conditions of ‘legal’ migration from Mexico. Indeed, this seeming paradox presents itself in a double sense: on the one hand, apparently liberalizing immigration laws have in fact concealed significantly restrictive features, especially for Mexicans; on the other hand, ostensibly restrictive immigration laws purportedly intended to deter migration have nonetheless been instrumental in sustaining Mexican migration, but only by significantly restructuring its legal status as undocumented. Beginning in the 1960s, precisely when Mexican migration escalated dramatically – and ever since – persistent revisions in the law have effectively foreclosed the viable possibilities for the great majority who would migrate from Mexico to do so in accord with the law, and thus played an instrumental role in the production of a legally vulnerable undocumented workforce of ‘illegal aliens’”.

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Excerpt from: De Genova, N. (2004) The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant ‘Illegality’, *Latino Studies* 2(2), pp. 160-185.
doi: [10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600085](https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600085)



THE CASE OF SOMALI REFUGEE MOHAMAD

On December 2, 2020, Mohamad, a Somali refugee, tried to reach Greece on a rubber boat together with 33 other people. In the middle of the Aegean Sea, the boat got into distress. Mohamad, with no experience in seafaring, tried everything he could to prevent a shipwreck and to steer the boat safely ashore. Despite its efforts, the boat capsized close to the island of Lesbos, and two young women died. After the rescue operations, Mohamad was arrested for “driving the boat” and charged with the “illegal transportation of third-country nationals into Greek territory” (smuggling), with the aggravating circumstances of endangering the life of 32 people and causing the death of two. On Thursday, 13th May 2021, at the trial against Mohamad, two people who were in the same boat with him testified before the court that Mohamad was just one passenger trying to save everyone’s life, that the smuggler was a Turkish man who abandoned them in the sea and that the shipwreck was caused by the actions of the smuggler and the Turkish Coast Guard. However, the judge insisted on the fact that in the preliminary hearing two witnesses pointed to the defendant as the ‘driver’. Mohamad repeated that he was a refugee with no sea-faring experience, who took the wheel only to save his co-passengers, and that he did not know that such an action was considered a crime under Greek law. To this, the judge responded by asking: ‘How is it possible you did not know that what you were doing was illegal? Then why you did not come to Greece with a ferry or by buying a ticket?’ Mohamad was sentenced to 146 years in prison. The sentence was passed despite the passengers of the boat testifying that they owe their lives to the actions of Mohamad. The lawyers will file an appeal.

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Sources:

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MEDIA REPRESENTATION EXAMPLES

CALAIS' HARBOUR IN A STATE OF SIEGE IN FACE OF MIGRANTS

Since the summer, harbour authorities have been faced with the massive intrusion of hundreds of illegal migrants. Police forces estimate their numbers at 3 000, coming mainly from Eritrea. The 'Far West'. A situation that is 'out of control'. An 'area of lawlessness'. In Calais, the harbour and town are 'under a state of siege', to the despair of authorities and inhabitants who see the situation steadily deteriorating, as the number of clandestines soars and their determination to reach the English 'El Dorado' continues to grow. Despite the recent agreement between France and the UK providing for cooperation between the two governments in order to improve the management of cross-channel migratory pressure, new levels of aggressiveness and unprecedented types of behaviour are appearing on the ground, where incidents and outbursts are multiplying.

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Excerpt from 'Le Figaro', France (2014) – available via House of European History: Borders and Bridges – Migration, resource 12, https://historia-europa.ep.eu/sites/default/files/Discover/EducatorsTeachers/ActivitiesForYourClassroom/migr-resource-12-en_0.pdf, accessed 11 January 2022.



OVER 300 000 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS WILL TRY TO REACH GREECE

The country is well prepared to deal with the consequences of developments in Syria and the waves of immigrants that will try to illegally enter our country via the sea channel. The Minister of Shipping, Miltiades Varvitsiotis, has expressed his fear that the number of Syrian immigrants who enter Greece will increase dramatically, due to the recent events in Syria. When informing the parliamentary Committee on Production and Trade about the reform of the Ministry of Shipping, Mr Varvitsiotis estimated that the number of immigrants that will try to cross the country's sea borders will be over 300 000. He also emphasised that Greece was ready to tackle the consequences of the recent dramatic events in Syria. The Ministry of Shipping, he stressed, is working closely with other ministries and committees responsible to take all the necessary measures and step up control in order to deal with the huge pressure that will be caused by the influx of immigrants trying to enter the country illegally.

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Excerpt from 'Proto Thema', Greece (2014) – available via House of European History: Borders and Bridges – Migration, resource 12, https://historia-europa.ep.eu/sites/default/files/Discover/EducatorsTeachers/ActivitiesForYourClassroom/migr-resource-12-en_0.pdf, accessed 11 January 2022.



SECRET REPORT WARNS OF MIGRATION MELTDOWN IN BRITAIN

A massive rise in immigration next year could trigger a devastating crisis in Britain's schools, housing and welfare services, according to a secret Government report leaked to The Mail on Sunday. The document reveals that every Government department has been ordered to draw up multi-million-pound emergency plans after being told public services face catastrophe as a result of the hundreds of thousands of Eastern Europeans pouring into Britain. It also warns that a 'step change' in the level of immigration next year could make things even worse, triggering an angry backlash across the country. The disclosure comes as The Mail on Sunday reveals that the new wave of immigration is causing as much social strife in Eastern Europe as it is in Britain. Our investigation found Poles are dumping children in local care homes so they can travel to Britain. Some reportedly killed themselves after being left behind. The leaked document, written by Home Office Minister Joan Ryan, is entitled 'Migration from Eastern Europe: Impact on Public Services and Community Cohesion'

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Excerpt from 'Mail Online' UK (2006) – available via House of European History: Borders and Bridges – Migration, resource 12, https://historia-europa.ep.eu/sites/default/files/Discover/EducatorsTeachers/ActivitiesForYourClassroom/migr-resource-12-en_0.pdf, accessed 11 January 2022.



MIGRATION LETTERS

JOZEF KOSTLAN

There were over four hundred souls on our ship. The next day it began to rock us so unpleasantly that we could not fall asleep, and just over half of us were choking or throwing up. The crew, or sailors, were nailing and tying down the luggage chests to the posts to prevent them from tipping over. It then first occurred to us that much worse times are awaiting us, but thanks to God the voyage was good. But there was always a day or two when it was rocky, and then it was calm again. This lasted for two and a half weeks, and then it was fine all the way till the end. My weak stomach and constitution were giving me troubles for three and a half weeks, so much so that I could not eat, and as soon as I raised my head it started spinning, and my stomach was turning, but then I got used to it and food tasted good again. Francek was also in bad shape, although not as long. Anna and Krystýna were also down for about four days, but at least they were not throwing up or were not too sick. Jozífek and Anička were throwing up constantly. That is how it is on a ship, there is fear and stench, thirst and hunger.

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Excerpt from Jozef Kostlan letter to relatives in Bohemia (1863)– available via House of European History: Borders and Bridges – Migration, resource 6, https://historia-europa.ep.eu/sites/default/files/Discover/EducatorsTeachers/ActivitiesForYourClassroom/migr-resource-6-en_0.pdf, accessed 11 January 2022.



ADAM RACZKOWSKI

Dear sister... I am already with my brother, thanks to God and to God's Mother. As to work, I don't hope to work sooner than autumn, because brother also has no work since Christmas and cannot get work, because all factories are stopped and there is no work until they elect the president in autumn. Then perhaps we shall get work. And at present brother has no pleasure in life either, because there are five of them and I make the sixth, and all this means spending money. And you know that when I left you, I had neither clothes nor shirts; so when I came to them, sister-in-law and brother gave me at once clothes of theirs and we all three went to the city and bought clothes, one suit for working days and another for holidays, and everything in the way of clothes. So you can understand that when we bought everything it cost them about 80 roubles. The watch and the suit for church cost alone 60 roubles. I have nothing more to write, only I bid you goodbye, dear sister and brother-in-law. When I get work I won't forget you. Remain with God. Both Raczkowskis with their children send also their bows. I beg you, answer the soonest possible.

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Excerpt from Adam Raczkowski letter to his sister in Poland (1904) – available via History Matters, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/36/>, accessed 11 January 2022.



SILVANO AMERICO MION

In 1946 jobless men began to flee to France to have a better future; so too I decided with my other friends towards the end of September... in Pordenone at the station there were about 50 people... we arrived near Aosta: we were hundreds from everywhere with the same fate, escaped without a passport. The carabinieri and armed border guards came, they asked us for an identity card and the older ones refused to present it, then a quarrel with the carabinieri began... a carabinieri took his gun out, one who had done several years of war and imprisonment came forward and told him 'shoot if you have courage': then all murmured against them, the carabinieri remained senseless, then someone began to turn away then all the others followed. We walked on a path two guides asked us if we were going to France they said: 'follow us!'... Towards evening, after several hours of walking along paths, some young people and I were helping each other to carry children and some tired old people who could not make it. First stop we arrived outside Aosta in a shelter... we put suitcases and backpacks on the ground in a room, we ate then... we slept as we were tired. In the morning the guards woke us up early around 4 am and everyone took the backpack or suitcase, what we had, two backpacks were missing, mine and one of a friend... We had to cross a dangerous path to avoid the border guards, we were 54 people and two guides it was still dark when we saw the spotlights from below pointed towards us. The guides ordered us all to sit on the ground and not to move; the silence was broken with bursts of machine gun fire, we stood still for about 15 minutes in fear, the parents would shut the mouths of the young people so that they would not scream. Then the spotlights turned elsewhere, the guides ordered us to run away quickly because there was a slope, we heard other bursts further away, they were not intended for us... we were walking through the valley the wind began to whistle: it was the beginning of a snowfall. The guides ordered us to stand together and gave us a rope so that everyone was holding with their hand so as not to be overwhelmed by this storm that lasted a couple of hours. Arrived in a cave, we lit a fire as we were wet and ate... We went to sleep because we had to face the last battle. As soon as we woke up it was the departure. It was still night... As you walked on the glaciers you could see dark spots: they were suitcases or some backpacks that people had to leave, then a little further on they were dead; I found a suitcase and I was happy, we went a bit forward there was a dark point it was a family cuddled up to protect the two children.... People who ran away without guides, not having two thousand lire to pay, went towards death, they saw the suitcase that I had found, 'that suitcase was mine I had to leave it to save the children'. I was all happy that it was his;

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so I returned it. ... We walked a few more hours and we were already out of the glaciers, they were the poles of the borders of Italy and France. The silence was broken with joyful shrieks: the battle was over. We walked in the French territory and the guides accompanied us a little longer, it was the dawn of 27 September 1946. ... the guides stopped you were on a path that led to a town, we gave 1,000 lire half at the start and half at the end as an agreement we all greeted happy with the wish of good luck.

Excerpt from Silvano Americo Mion Diary (1946) – available via Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale: La fuga in Francia, <https://www.idiariiraccontano.org/estratti/la-fuga-in-francia/>, accessed 11 January 2022.



PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?

“The literature on push and pull forces often ascribes reasons for migration to singular causes or forces such as demographic, ecological, economical, political and social. The combined desires of mankind transcend these categories with one major aim, which is, ‘aspirations towards a better and humane life’ which encapsulates the notion of development. Development is the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom such as poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance of repressive states (Sen 1999)... Migration should therefore be seen as a holistic process reflecting the aspirations of people and places imbued with shortfalls/abundance in criteria for a good life. Population pressure and land fragmentation per se will not make people migrate, rather, the totality of circumstances that transcend land availability through social relations, income from non-farm activities, employment guarantees by the state, level of oppression and the functioning of markets will define the possibilities for making a good/bad life. These determine whether a person moves to a desired location with better possibilities for enhancing personal capabilities or not.”

Excerpt from: Yaro, J.A. (2008): Development as Push and Pull factor in Migration, <https://heimatkunde.boell.de/de/2008/12/01/development-push-and-pull-factor-migration> , accessed 11 January 2022.



THE PART OF MY IDENTITY THAT ...

WE ALL COME FROM SOMEWHERE!

The part of my identity that...	Class	Race	Gender	National origin	Religion	None of them
I am most aware of on a daily basis is						
I am the least aware of on a daily basis is						
was most emphasized in my family growing up was						
I wish I knew more about is						
provides me the most privilege is						
I believe is the most misunderstood by others is						
I feel is difficult to discuss with others who identify differently is						
makes me feel discriminated against is						



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